

Stay Alive by CelestialSymphony333

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Summary: The Stranger Things gang is reaped into the Hunger Games. They will do anything to survive... but there can only be one victor.

1. Happy Hunger Games

A young man followed his mother and little brother. He glanced at a Peacekeeper overlooking the citizens of District 12 as they made their way to the Justice Building, where soon, the Reaping would take place once again. When he reached the Justice Building, the young man realized he had lost sight of his mother and brother. "Over here, Jonathan," said his mother. Jonathan joined them near the front of the crowd.

Once everyone stood before the Justice Building, a woman with neon green hair spoke. "Happy Hunger Games! Without further ado, let's begin. Oh - and may the odds be ever in your favor." The woman reached into a glass ball and dug around in it for a few moments before pulling out a slip of paper, which she unfolded. "Suzie Slater!"

No one moved. "Come on up, Suzie." Jonathan then located Suzie as she walked up to the woman, her eyes full of tears. "Alright, next the boys!"

It took considerably longer for the woman to choose the boy, which irritated Jonathan. Finally she read the name. "William Byers!"

"No!" Joyce held Will against her, and as Peacekeepers approached her, Jonathan intervened.

"I volunteer! I volunteer as tribute!"

Silence. Then, "Jonathan, no, you can't - "

"Yes I can," Jonathan said, cutting Joyce off.

"Okay then, it appears we have a volunteer..." said the green-haired woman as Jonathan took his place beside her. She cleared her throat. "I give you the District 12 tributes!"

Jonathan gave Will a look that he hoped said, "It'll be okay. I'll be fine." But as Peacekeepers nudged him and Suzie into the Justice Building, he wasn't sure Will got the message. He felt a lump in his pocket and managed to smile for a split second. It was a rock Will

gave him that morning that Will said would give him luck.

The odds were definitely not in his favor, but he would try to make it to the end - for Will.

2. Make an Impression

"Ladies and gentlemen, your master of ceremonies, Murray Bauman!"

The applause from the auditorium just beyond intimidated Jonathan even more than his private session with the head gamemaker, Martin Brenner did. He received a training score of eight for demonstrating his skill with camouflage, which was average, but he was satisfied with it.

Suzie tugged at the sleeve of his suit. "We have to make an impression," she reminded him. "It's the only way we're going to get sponsors."

"We already did at the Tribute Parade, don't you think?" Jonathan said.

"Yes, but we have to keep it up. That's all I'm saying." The girl's confidence surprised Jonathan. He wished they could both win, but of course, the games didn't work that way.

The female District 1 tribute, Carol, strode past them as the applause for her subsided. She wore a dress that made her look like a queen. Jonathan was used to the ridiculous outfits the Capitol took such pride in. As much as he despised his suit, not to mention participating in all the events that preceded the games, he was ready to pretend.

"I must say, Steve, you look dashing in that tux. And how does your hair do that?"

"It's a secret," Steve said jokingly. The crowd laughed.

"So Steve - you received a training score of ten. That's not bad, not bad at all, am I right?"

"I'm happy with it. I didn't expect it to be that good."

"Well, we did. Didn't we?" The crowd exploded. Steve looked at the people screaming his name, trying to get his attention, and wondered

how they could be so obsessed with him when he was probably going to die a gruesome death the following day.

Nancy took her seat across from Murray. "I think we can all agree, we were *shocked* when your brother was chosen as the other District 7 tribute."

"Yeah, so was I."

"I'm curious, Nancy, what do you think about living in the Capitol?"

"It's definitely different. Much... cleaner," Nancy said with a nervous laugh. The crowd laughed with her. "And it isn't surrounded by trees."

"That it isn't. So tell us - do you have someone waiting for you back home?" Murray inquired with a grin.

"You mean a boyfriend? No."

"Really? Well that's hardly believable."

"No really, there's no one." Nancy was telling the truth, but she did have eyes for Jonathan. She could tell he was masking fear and rage just like she was. If she could choose one tribute to become allies with in the arena, it would be him.

"And now from District 12, Jonathan!" Jonathan walked onto the stage and was slightly taken aback by the applause and cheering. He was relieved people liked him, and realized Suzie was right - they had to keep it up. Murray looked at the audience too. "I don't know about you folks, but I got a little teary when Jonathan volunteered for his brother." There were murmurs of agreement. "It was truly heart-rending."

"Oh, well, I did what I had to do," Jonathan said quietly.

"I have a somewhat... personal question for you. Did he say goodbye to you?"

"Yes."

"And what did you say to him?"

Jonathan swallowed. "I told him I would try to win. For him."

The crowd remained silent. "Indeed you will." Murray stood and Jonathan followed suit. "Ladies and gentlemen, Jonathan Byers!"

Jonathan walked off the stage. On his way to the elevator his heart sank as it struck him that the odds were still not in his favor. He may have earned a few sponsors, but he was from District 12, and it was the Careers from Districts 1, 2 and 4 who almost always won the games. He knew what his strategy would be, but was beginning to doubt it would work in the end.

3. At Least We're Alive

El's stylist zipped up her light coat. She placed her hands on El's shoulders. "It's waterproof," she said. "So you can expect some kind of body of water."

El nodded and embraced her stylist, all the while trembling. "Thank you, Kali... for everything."

"You're special," said Kali as they released each other. "You can win. I know you can."

El jumped as the countdown began. She looked desperately at Kali, then approached the tube that would send her up to the arena. "Seven. Six..."

Once in the tube, El turned around to face Kali, who mouthed "You can win." She was sent up into darkness, which was soon replaced by bright light. She took in the arena - the tall grass surrounding her pedestal, the cliffside that towered over her, and the Cornucopia, which was in the middle of a shallow river. Some of the other tributes were panicking, others appeared ready to kill.

The countdown began. El wrongly assumed she could immediately run as far away from the Cornucopia and other tributes as possible, but they were trapped in a canyon that looked like it went on for miles. When the countdown reached one, most of the tributes ran to the Cornucopia, but El sprinted away from it. She heard screams from behind her but dared not look back.

When her legs started burning she finally stopped and turned around. The Cornucopia was out of sight, and the river was all she could hear. But considering there were only two directions to go from the Cornucopia, there were undoubtedly tributes on her tail. She was determined to stay ahead of them, so she continued running as fast as her burning legs allowed her to.

Jonathan was already implementing his strategy, which was to stay hidden. He had found a secluded area along the cliffside that was

enclosed by willows, and was sitting in the grass, panting. He managed to pick up a very small bag before running off, but witnessed Suzie get stabbed several times as he did so.

A canon went off, followed by another, indicating two more tributes had fallen. Jonathan opened the bag, which contained some rope and a water bottle. The rope was practically useless as he knew nothing about tying knots, which was Suzie's specialty. The water bottle, on the other hand, would allow him to conserve water rather than make multiple trips to the river. His goal, after all, was to remain unnoticed throughout the entirety of the games.

Shouting from nearby made his ears perk up.

"Shoot 'em down, Carol!"

"I'm trying!"

"Do I have to do everything myself?"

Tommy took Carol's bow and an arrow and aimed at Nancy, who was clinging to the cliffside. Behind them stood Steve, watching.

Mike was slightly higher up than Nancy - they were trying to reach a cave. "We have to keep going!" he yelled.

"I don't think I can!"

Mike looked down and saw Nancy struggling with her footing. Before Tommy released the arrow, Steve put a hand on his arm. "Let me try," he said.

"I swear, if you don't get one of them..." Tommy fumed as he handed Steve the bow and arrow. He aimed ever-so-slightly to the left of Nancy's head, which was exactly where the arrow went.

"Come on, Nancy!" screamed Mike. She found a foothold and continued climbing.

"I'll get her this time," Steve assured an enraged Tommy. He nocked another arrow, but didn't release it until Nancy and Mike were mere

feet from the cave entrance. It struck the rock wall just to the right of Nancy's elbow.

"Dammit!" Tommy kicked the dirt as Nancy and Mike lifted themselves onto the ledge and disappeared. "I thought you were the archery expert, Harrington!"

"It's hard when the target is moving," Steve muttered.

"Let's just start a fire," Carol sighed.

Forty feet above, Nancy and Mike leaned against the cave wall and caught their breath. It was more a nook than a cave, but it provided shelter nonetheless. "Great, now the Careers know we're here," Nancy said.

"At least we're alive," Mike pointed out.

"Yeah, but now we're trapped here." After a few minutes of listening to Tommy and Carol bicker over how to start a fire, Nancy said, "We're luckier than them."

"What do you mean?"

"All the other tributes are alone. Well - until they start forming alliances. But we already know each other."

"True." Mike smiled faintly and started shivering. "I wish we could start a fire up here..."

Panem's national anthem started playing, and Nancy and Mike watched as the dead tributes' faces appeared in the sky. Nancy recognized a few - the District 3 boy with curly brown hair and no front teeth, the District 12 girl and six others. "We should take turns sleeping," Nancy said. "They might try to come up here."

"If they do, what are we supposed to do about it? We don't have any weapons."

Nancy picked up a rock the size of her head. "We have these."

"Can I be the first to sleep?" Mike asked with a yawn.

"Sure. I'll wake you up in a couple hours." Mike closed his eyes and Nancy watched as his shivering became less convulsive. She listened to the Careers talk about hunting down more tributes in the morning. *Good, they'll be gone*, she thought.

She noticed that the one who shot at her twice remained oddly silent. Tommy referred to him as "the archery expert," which led Nancy to wonder whether he missed on purpose. Perhaps he was on their side, but if true, that begged the question - why was he with the Careers?

4. Safety In Numbers

For the past seven hours, Max had been asleep high in a pine tree. She blinked her eyes open. Yesterday was full of blood, some of which she shed - the District 3 and District 9 boys were her kills. After she had what she needed from the Cornucopia, she followed the river for what seemed like hours before discovering a landslide, which was really a way to get to the top of the cliff.

She heard movement and instinctively unsheathed one of her knives. The boy wandering below was from District 10 and, like Max, received a training score of eleven. He held what appeared to be a slingshot.

Max threw her knife at Lucas, but missed his neck by inches. "Shit..." As she frantically unsheathed another knife, he saw her, picked up the knife and bolted. "Shit!" As she watched him disappear through the trees, Max's stomach growled. She obtained three knives, a backpack, a water bottle and a matchbox from the Cornucopia, but no food. Her stomach growled again. "Shut up..."

She carefully descended the tree and made her way to the edge of the cliff, where the day before she saw some blueberry bushes. She started collecting them in her hand.

"I wouldn't eat those if I were you." Max spun around to face the District 11 boy, who wielded an axe. During training, Max overheard him say her knife-throwing skills were "mediocre."

"Why not? Also why didn't you kill me when you had the chance?"

"Those are nightlock berries. You'd be dead in seconds," said the young man. "I saw you at the Cornucopia and, well, I guess I underestimated you."

"Yeah, I guess you did. Get to the point."

"I propose an alliance."

Max raised her eyebrows. "Why, exactly?"

"Safety in numbers, am I right?"

"Fine. You did just save my life, so..."

"I have food by the way. Here." The young man held out an apple.

"Thanks. Well, if we're going to be in this together, I may as well know your name."

"Billy. You're Maxine, right?"

"Keep calling me that and we're going to have a problem. It's Max."

"Got it."

"Hm... Why don't we head to the landslide?" Max suggested. "It's the only way to get up here, that I know of anyway. If anyone else finds it, we'll be waiting for them."

"Sounds like a plan." Max looked at the berries in her hand. "Keep them, they might be useful later on."

"How?"

"You never know."

And so the two of them hiked along the edge of the cliff toward the landslide, where they would be ready for any tributes unlucky enough to walk into their trap.

It was impossible for El to sleep the previous night. She was near the edge of the arena and could safely assume there were no tributes in the vicinity, but there were other threats that she had seen slaughter tributes in their sleep in previous games - freezing temperatures, acid rain and mutts were just a few. Sleeping was risky, and she refused to take any risks.

A loud beeping from overhead interrupted her thoughts. Her heart lifted when she realized what it was - a gift from a sponsor. Two boxes attached to a silver silk parachute landed in front of her, one much larger than the other. She opened this one first and stared at its

contents - a bow and quiver of arrows. A small note was attached that read,

Thought you might like this.

-Hopper

El smirked as she opened the second box, which contained two warm waffles and a small bottle of syrup. She laughed when she read the note.

Your favorite.

"Thank you," she said, knowing Hopper was watching. She devoured the waffles and then picked up her bow. It was the only weapon she was comfortable using, and she had decent aim. With it the odds were very much in her favor, and she knew this. So she swung the quiver over her shoulder and marched back to the Cornucopia.

5. Promise

A bloodcurdling scream shattered the silence, followed by a canon.

"Why don't you get us some water, Harrington." Tommy tossed Steve a water bottle, which he took downstream, toward where he thought the scream came from. He didn't know how, but it sounded familiar.

In the distance, the landslide came into view. Finally, Steve had an opportunity to abandon Tommy and Carol. He was sick of being a Career, but now he had an easy way out of the canyon.

He found something quite unsettling at the base of the landslide - the body of the other District 4 tribute. "Robin?" He fell to his knees by her side and looked back and forth between her glassy, unmoving eyes and the knife in her chest. "Robin...!"

Steve befriended Robin years ago. She was the only person who kept him sane as they prepared for the games. During training, they made each other laugh until it hurt multiple times. There was nothing in the world that could break their friendship.

"Wait... He's a friend."

Steve saw Billy and Max in the bushes at the top of the landslide. "Did you do this?" he demanded of Billy.

"No. I didn't realize it was her... I'm sorry," said Billy as he and Max skidded down the landslide. "But hey... Glad you made it this far."

Steve couldn't take his eyes off the knives clipped to Max's pant pocket. "It was you then."

Max swallowed. "Yeah. I'm sorry."

"Harrington!" bellowed Tommy.

"I should go."

"You've been with the Careers?" inquired Billy, his eyebrows furrowed.

"Yeah, but I'm leaving them."

"You could join us," Billy offered.

"Or," Max chimed in, "You could squeeze some juice out of these and put it in their water." Steve's eyes widened at the sight of the berries in the side pocket of Max's backpack.

"Are those..."

Max nodded. "Nightlock."

"HARRINGTON!"

Steve looked back - he had to act quickly. "Give me some."

"Took you long enough."

Steve handed Tommy the water bottle. "Sorry." He tried to look like he wasn't anxiously waiting for Tommy to drink. It dawned on him that for Max's plan to work, Carol would have to drink immediately after Tommy. His palms started sweating as Tommy removed the lid and took a sip, which became two, until he had consumed half the water.

"Jesus Tommy, leave some for me!"

"Oh. Sorry."

As Carol took a quick sip, Tommy coughed a couple times. He then collapsed and started wheezing. Within ten seconds, his wheezing faded into silence. Two canons went off in quick succession.

"I'll be damned, it worked." Steve took one last look at the two of them before returning to Billy and Max.

Nancy and Mike were still in the nook, but they were starving and dehydrated. An announcement echoed throughout the arena. "Attention tributes, attention. There will be a feast tomorrow at the Cornucopia, commencing at sunrise. That is all."

"I'm going," Nancy said.

"So am I."

"No, you're not. You're going to wait here for me to come back with food and water."

"You realize what a feast is, don't you?" Mike said. "It's a bloodbath."

"All the more reason for you to stay. Besides, it's also an opportunity to get supplies."

"And what if you don't come back?"

"I will."

"How can you be so certain? The Careers are probably guarding the Cornucopia right now, and in case you've forgotten, we have no weapons."

"Weapons aren't necessary to win the Hunger Games," Nancy said. "It's been done without them."

"I just - I don't want you to go," Mike said desperately.

"We don't have much of a choice. We either die here or I take a risk and go."

They were interrupted by the anthem blaring. The faces of Robin, Tommy, Carol, the District 6 girl and the District 8 boy appeared one after the other in the sky. "Wait - weren't two of those Careers?" Mike inquired.

"Yeah. Maybe the Careers won't be guarding the Cornucopia after all," Nancy said. "Let's get some sleep."

Mike scooted closer to Nancy. "Be careful at the feast, okay?"

"Don't worry about me - I'll be fine."

"Do you promise?"

"Promise."